



**Stephen McKeever, First Vice President
AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO
Board Member, CommPACT Community Schools Collaborative**

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 25, 2015

***HB 6824 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30,
2017, and Making Appropriations Therefore and Other Provisions Related to
Revenue***

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Steve McKeever and I am First Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of local unions representing nearly 30,000 public and private sector workers including approximately 4,000 paraprofessionals and 11,000 teachers. I come before you this evening as a Board Member of the CommPACT Community Schools Collaborative to ask that you please restore the funding for this important public education program.

The CommPACT Community Schools Collaborative is a coalition of UCONN's Neag School of Education, American Federation of Teachers Connecticut, Connecticut Education Association, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents and Connecticut Federation of School Administrators. The purpose of the coalition is to provide support to districts committed to improving family and community engagement as part of their efforts to improve student learning. By sharing best practices and providing resources, materials, technical assistance, and evaluation frameworks, the coalition guides the establishment of community schools, which provide additional services to students and their families.

Currently CommPACT has established family and community engagement centers in in four schools across the state: Bassick High School in Bridgeport; West Side Middle School in Waterbury; John Barry Elementary School in Meriden; and Robert O'Brien STEM Academy in East Hartford. These centers serve many purposes, including rooms for parent-teacher-student conversations and intervention rooms that are used to help students resolve conflicts before they escalate. CommPACT also helps these schools to identify strengths and resources in their community by using the Aspire Survey.

Research overwhelmingly shows that parent engagement is a key component of student success. School design turnaround plans and school improvement plans therefore are investing more in methods that improve parental involvement. CommPACT is a resource that districts are using to help them do this. The results have been significant.

The governor's proposed budget completely eliminates all of CommPACT's funding - \$475,000 per year. I understand that in a budget year like this, \$475,000 is a large hole to fill, but these funds have significant positive impacts on schools, parents and communities. We would be grateful for any funds you could restore.

Thank you for your time, I am available to answer any of your questions.